

Leading Wales: Mid-Programme Evaluation Report

Cohort 2 of the Further Education Leadership Programme for Colleges

Introduction

After the successful delivery of the first cohort (pilot) of the Leading Wales – The FE Leadership Programme for Senior Leaders in Colleges in Wales in 2015/16, the Welsh Government has funded a second cohort of the programme, to be delivered through 16/17.

Due to the popularity and success of the pilot programme, a large number of applications was received for participation in cohort 2. With the support of the Welsh Government and the programme facilitators, 15 suitable participants were selected, based on their personal development needs and aspirations for supporting their organisation's success and growth.

Programme Outline

The programme is an innovative leadership development programme designed to develop the personal qualities, leadership skills and high level management capabilities of senior leaders in Welsh colleges. The programme helps improve their management and leadership effectiveness in their current role and supports their development to move on to the next level.

The following five modules were scheduled to be delivered as part of the programme:

Module Title	Delivery Dates	Facilitator(s)
1 - Understanding Leadership in the Context of FE	10 & 11 May 2016 (Cardiff)	Joanna Gaukroger and Michael Bryant-Mole
2 - Leading in the Current Context – Progression & Performance	05 & 06 July 2016 (Wrexham)	Joanna Gaukroger and Michael Bryant-Mole
3 - Leading Strategic Thinking	19 & 20 October 2016 (Cardiff)	Joanna Gaukroger and Larry Shulman
4 - Leading Major Change Projects	06 & 07 December 2016 (Wrexham)	Larry Shulman and Michael Bryant-Mole
5 - Leading in the Current Context – Employers	07 & 08 February 2017 (Cardiff)	Joanna Gaukroger and Michael Bryant-Mole

All modules are delivered by two knowledgeable and skilled facilitators and include expert speaker sessions from highly experienced leaders from a range of backgrounds, bringing external perspectives to reflect on current and future practice.

Participants also benefit from extended individual and small group tutorial support to discuss current issues and assist them with embedding and progressing actions. Each module has been further tailored since the pilot to ensure it remains relevant and meets the current and evolving development needs of the leaders in Welsh colleges.

Written delegates' feedback received immediately after the face-to-face deliveries was very positive on the three modules completed so far. Delegates left the training with new ideas, lots of tools and techniques and action plans to follow up on and implement. In addition, the facilitators have also provided one-to-one support to many of the delegates to ensure the learning is embedded.

Evaluation and Impact

After the delivery of the third module, a mid-programme review was conducted through an online evaluation to gather feedback from participants and their respective principals/line managers on the impact of the programme to date. Responses were received from all fifteen participants and all but three of their respective principals/line managers.

Many of the participants have regularly discussed the programme in detail with their line managers, through formal appraisals and via one-to-one meetings. Some of the discussions have been focused on the 360 degree feedback received and others reflected on the importance of strategic thinking and organisational culture, linked to values and behaviours.

The principals' and line managers' responses confirmed their delegates shared their experience and fed back after modules on: some of their learnings; the quality of input from guest speakers; the impact on their personal development; a number of opportunities to explore for their organisation and how much they are enjoying the experience. One principal felt that it was too early in the process to evaluate the outcome.

Impact on the participants

All participants' responses are very positive on the impact each of the modules has had to date on the development of their skills, behaviours and attitudes. Their feedback includes:

Module 1:

- *Recognising that I needed to seek more feedback from my line manager and give better feedback to my team members.*
- *Improved Questioning and Listening skills, recognising the benefits of empowerment leading to more confident managers.*
- *Module 1 provided me with a much broader depth to better understand leadership within the Welsh FE sector. This also gave me an opportunity to improve my behaviour and attitude towards being a senior manager / leader within my own organisation with practical skills to use in the college.*
- *Delegation increased - financial control for non-pay devolved to direct reports which had previously been resisted - this is directly related to the 360 degree feedback. Helped free up time to be more strategic rather than operational.*

Module 2:

- *A systems review of admissions process*
- *Self-reflection, understanding the benefits of networking, recognising the potential benefits to the organisation of networking and making the most of each opportunity.*
- *Module 2 was very good in providing practical methods of improving performance and how to deal with people not performing. This has improved my own personal effectiveness to deal with performance in the workplace.*
- *Leadership culture and organisational framework particularly engaging - I and a colleague are planning some work on this internally to develop for the organisation, outstanding external speaker on employment law.*

Module 3:

- *The SMT training day has been based on methods learnt.*
- *Future proof organisation - looking at possible future scenarios and how to build a resilient college.*
- *Module 3 provided very useful methods of addressing organisational issues with strategic thinking and actions. This has also improved my ability to deal with strategic choices with useful tools to assist strategic decision making.*
- *Much clearer about our strategic drivers and the future we need to start planning for.*

The principals and line managers reported that there has been a noticeable increase in confidence, ability to look at the bigger picture, delegation of tasks and enhanced

strategic thinking when dealing with problem solving and decision making. Some of the responses from principals and line managers include:

- *They are far more self-aware of how their behaviour affects others and their empathy levels have certainly increased. A fuller understanding of the macro level within which FE operates has been developed thus a greater understanding of why the CEO and Board of Governors take certain directions of travel.*
- *Looking at bigger picture. Reflective on where we are as an organisation.*
- *The candidate is demonstrating confidence in discussions, and also thinking and contributing at a different level. The candidate is also delegating more, and therefore showing more confidence in her team, which engenders confidence.*

Some of the principals also reflected on the long term impact of the programme from the pilot participants. One of the impacts has been the progression of individuals, either within the organisation or outside and into other FE institutions. Other benefits include the widening of the college's network, participants being more strategic in their approach, showing greater support for staff development and bringing new ideas and strategic input into discussions. Principals' responses include:

- *One of the participants on the pilot programme has just been promoted to a Senior Post Holder role within the organisation following a challenging appointment process, I doubt that he would have been as professional and rounded in this process had he not been on the programme.*
- *A broader focus on culture change in the organisation and how to drive it.*
- *Two colleagues were in the pilot programme. One has left and been promoted to the executive of an organisation. The other member of staff has become far more strategic in approach and has clearly learnt not to get overly involved in operational matters when there are people in place to deal with them.*

Impact on the institutions

As a result of the learning from the programme to date, the participants have been able to take away tools and techniques which they have used with their leadership and management teams in their organisation. Here are some examples of how the programme has impacted their organisations to date:

- *As a result of the programme I have personally driven a college side review of our core values and behaviours. I have also used a number of the programme ideas/theories back at the college to drive new ideas/new ways of thinking at management/team meetings. I am also now championing a similar but tailored management development programme for all college managers.*
- *I think that one of the key impacts is that we are starting to empower staff in a way we have not done before. Before this programme, my natural work/leadership style was to take on the bulk of decision making that my managers could/should have done. The programme has also helped me to reassess my strategic role and how adjusting and refining my role through a greater understanding of the various contexts that impinge on FE leaders has led to a more thoughtful approach to my strategy as a leader and, therefore, the college's journey to further growth and excellence.*
- *I have successfully implemented a new quality assurance system which I partially attribute to new skills and improved confidence that this course has awarded me.*

A few of the principals felt that it's too early to quantify the impact of the programme on the organisation while others gave the following feedback:

- *We have a new and very positive and enthusiastic senior manager in post who is continuing to grow. Her confidence has been boosted through the networking with other colleagues on the programme, as well as learning from their experiences and successes. She has been able to share in a safe environment. She has been able to apply some of the theoretical aspects of the programme to her practice, but also recognise that on the ground, what is sometimes planned cannot always take place; as I said above, pragmatic.*
- *Participants have come back and shared some of their learning with peers in management groups which has widened the impact on an organisational level. As the participants have a greater understanding of wider issues both sectoral and from a leadership perspective they are behaving far more corporately and this then sets a different and more considered tone in certain management meetings. Several of the tasks they have completed have been relevant and useful to the operation of the institution, one in particular on a system to share underutilised staff hours with managers across the college, this has been embedded.*
- *Participants have shown improved understanding of the sector and greater awareness of the challenges and opportunities facing us.*

Module Content

All delegates are satisfied the content of the modules to date has met their personal development needs and those of their organisation. The content of the programme has been relevant with practical tools which were tailored to leadership challenges in the Welsh FE Sector. Delegates also found it invaluable to have the opportunity and time to network with colleagues from other colleges and self-reflect both on their own and with others.

All but one principal felt the programme content did meet the needs of the organisation.

A couple of delegates would like to see input from guest speakers from business sectors. In addition a few of the delegates would like to include the following topics in future programmes:

- *Developing advanced networking skills.*
- *Techniques for helping motivate staff within the difficult financial climate of FE. Changing the culture of an organisation.*

One delegate in particular mentioned *'a similar programme appropriately designed for middle managers aspiring to progress would be very beneficial.'*

Principals' and line managers' views on additional content include:

- *Financial aspects of managing within a college environment. Perhaps a bit more of an emphasis on mechanisms for driving up quality*
- *Business development*
- *Changing landscape in Wales*

N.B. Some of the additional topics requested above are covered in module four and five of the programme, such as the financial aspects of managing within a college environment.

Views differed on the question related to whether the programme should be offered as a whole or as individual modules. Most preferred the full programme as they felt the value is in the developmental aspect of the whole programme over a period of time. Some felt there is benefit in offering both options, tailored to meet individuals' needs and time available.

Further Leadership & Management Development Needs

Many of the principals and line managers felt the programme has been of benefit to date and would like this or a similar programme to continue in the future. Several also felt that there is a need for another cohort of this programme with senior managers as the target audience. A number of principals and line managers identified up to 38 potential applicants for another cohort of this programme.

All fifteen delegates and all the principals and line managers identified that there is a need for management development within their organisations. Twelve out of the fifteen delegates and eight out of the ten principals and line managers also identified a development need for first-line managers in their organisations.

Programme Funding

Most of the principals and line managers who responded felt that the organisation will not be able to fully-fund participants' places next year for this programme. However, two felt the organisation could fully-fund participants' places in the future, but not next year. Three people felt the organisation will be able to part-fund participants' places next year for this programme. Six people responded that the organisation could part-fund participants' places in the future, but not next year.

Conclusion

The written feedback received after each of the residential modules and the online feedback from the mid-programme review has demonstrated the positive impact this leadership programme has had to date on the successful development of knowledge, skills and behaviours, as well as the progression of senior leaders in the Welsh FE Sector. Some of the broader comments from the participants include:

- *This has been a transformative process for me.*
- *This has been the best leadership programme I have had experience of.*
- *The knowledge, confidence and support gained through the programme have been invaluable.*
- *Great enthusiastic trainers delivered in a "doing" style.*
- *The course is stimulating and provides lots of discussion and debate amongst practitioners in Wales. It is empowering to work as a unified body of managers.*
- *The professional and experienced trainers/coaches have been invaluable to my personal development working within the FE sector.*
- *The success of the programme so far has very much been down to the quality and expertise of the deliverers, with good use made of additional guest speakers to bring topics to life.*
- *The quality of the presenters is outstanding.*

Thanuja Kandasamy
Programme Manager, Leading Wales, The Further Education Leadership
Programme for Colleges
Report prepared: 16.12.16